



Health and Human Services MEDIA RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug. 4, 2016

‘No Swim’ advisory issued for Venice Fishing Pier Beach

SARASOTA COUNTY — As a precaution, Sarasota County health officials have issued a “No Swim” advisory at:

- **Venice Fishing Pier: 1600 Harbor Drive South, Venice, FL 34285**

The amount of enterococcus bacteria found during water quality testing on Wednesday, Aug. 3 was outside acceptable limits. The beach remains open. Wading, swimming and water recreation is not recommended as long as there is an advisory. People are encouraged to read the signage and heed flags when present at area beaches.

Some bacteria are naturally present in the environment. However, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has found a link between health and water quality. Signage advising the public not to swim or engage in water recreation at Venice Fishing Pier Beach will stay in place until follow-up water testing results meet the EPA’s recreational water quality standard. The Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) expects to have the next round of test results available on Friday, Aug. 5.

Enterococcus bacteria can come from a variety of natural and man-made sources. These include pet waste, livestock, birds, wildlife (land-dwelling and marine), stormwater runoff, and human sewage from failed septic systems and sewage spills.

No sewage spills have been reported within one mile of the beach in the past month.

The rapid response teams from the city of Venice and Sarasota County have determined that the cause of the elevated bacteria levels is likely due to natural sources. Wrack lines of decaying algae were observed along the shoreline. Wrack lines, which contain marine algae and a variety of marine organisms that provide food for shorebirds and wildlife, act as natural bacteria reservoirs. A large amount of bird activity along the shoreline, which can contribute to these elevated readings, was also observed.



MEDIA NOTES:

DOH-Sarasota Media Contact:

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Recent heavy rains in the area that wash accumulated pollutants, including bacteria from pet feces, birds, and wildlife into local waters are an important factor. In addition, higher surf conditions associated with the storms churn up sand from the bottom and can affect water quality.

DOH-Sarasota Environmental Administrator Tom Higginbotham emphasizes that the Florida Healthy Beaches program protects beach goers when conditions are unsuitable for swimming. We do this by testing beach water and providing up-to-date explanations of the results.

“When these bacteria are found at high levels in recreational waters, there is a risk that some people may become ill. People especially those who are very young, elderly or who have a weak immune system who swallow water while swimming can get stomach or intestinal illnesses. If water comes in contact with a cut or sore, people can get infections or rashes.” says Higginbotham.

Local health officials emphasize that beaches remain open. However, residents and visitors are urged not to wade, swim or engage in water recreation at Venice Fishing Pier Beach until the advisory is lifted. In addition, you should not eat shellfish such as crabs and shrimp collected in the immediate area of Venice Fishing Pier Beach. However, it is safe to fish and eat fin-fish from these waters.

“Our coastline of over 30 miles of world-class beaches is a wonderful asset to our community,” says Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County. “Let’s work together to help preserve this amenity.”

To help keep beach water safe for swimming and recreation, do not allow pets to roam on beaches and in park areas and pick up pet waste. Additionally, children in diapers and people of all ages with diarrhea should not go into the water.

Testing has revealed bacteria levels within acceptable limits at the following area beaches:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| North Lido Beach | North Jetty Beach |
| South Lido Park Beach | Venice Beach |
| Lido Casino Beach | |
| Siesta Beach | Service Club Beach |
| Bird Key Park (Ringling Causeway) | South Brohard Beach |
| Longboat Key Public Beach | Caspersen Beach |
| Turtle Beach | Manasota Key Beach |
| Nokomis Beach | Blind Pass Beach |



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“It is important to know that our beaches are never closed,” says Haley. “When making beach day plans, be sure to check the latest reports on beach conditions and read beach condition signs at beach entrance ways. The signs are also posted on lifeguard stands when present.”

For more information:

- Visit <https://ourgulfenvironment.scgov.net> and click on water monitoring and then bacterial testing to check beach water testing results of area Gulf beaches.
- Call 941-BEACHES (941-232-2437) or visit www.visitbeaches.org. Click on the same link to the mobile-friendly version of the beach conditions report.
- The local visitor and convention bureau known as Visit Sarasota County also provides extensive information about the Sarasota area, including its beaches. The website is www.visitsarasota.org.

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About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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For more information, visit www.sarasotahealth.org or call 941-861-2900.

Sarasota County prohibits discrimination in all services, programs or activities.
View the complete policy at www.scgov.net/ADA/Pages/default.aspx

MEDIA NOTES:

DOH-Sarasota Media Contact: A news release will be issued when the advisory is lifted

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Our Gulf Environment website: <https://ourgulfenvironment.scgov.net>



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